



Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes – 2015

Note: *New language is in italics.* Deleted language is indicated by strikethrough.

WESTERN DISTRICT

CHANGE—page 36

LAKE MARY RONAN

- Open March 1 to third Saturday in May: yellow perch *and northern pike* only.
- Open third Saturday in May through the end of February
- Salmon: 10 daily and 20 in possession
- Bass: open third Saturday in May through June 30: only 1 over 22 inches. Open July 1 through the end of February: 5 daily and in possession, only 1 over 12 inches. Closed March 1 to the third Saturday in May.
- *Northern pike: no limit*
- *Spearing: open for northern pike*

RATIONALE: The presence of northern pike in Lake Mary Ronan was first brought to the attention of the Department by an angler who caught a pike in June 2014 and reported it to FWP Enforcement personnel. How the pike got into the lake is unknown, but it did not occur through an act of FWP.

Pike introductions often result in reductions to other fish species. Pike are “top of the food chain” predators with the potential to impact the existing kokanee salmon and trout fisheries and the salmon brood source in the lake. This brood source provides salmon eggs for all kokanee stocking in Montana. The existing trout, salmon, bass and perch fishery provides over 20,000 angler-days per year. The recently completed ARM rule *Unauthorized Placement of Fish into Public Waters* lists management actions that may be taken by the Department to protect existing fisheries when an unauthorized placements occur, and liberalizing bag limits for the unauthorized species in one potential management action which is identified in the rule to achieve this objective.

This proposed no-limit regulation will give anglers the opportunity to harvest as many pike as they wish, with the goal of putting sufficient pressure on pike to keep them from becoming established. The institution of spearing as a legal means of take is being proposed primarily for the purpose of providing an additional harvest method to keep the pressure on the pike, with the recreational aspects of spearing being of secondary importance. FWP will monitor the effectiveness of spearing to ensure its utility, and to make sure that accidental killing of other species is minimal.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

CHANGE – page 64

MISSOURI RIVER

Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry Reservoir

- Localized spawning areas closed as posted from March 1 through June 15.
- Catch-and-release for brown trout, except anglers 14 years of age and younger may take 1 brown trout daily and in possession any size.
- Northern pike: No limit
- Walleye: ~~10~~ 12 daily, ~~no more than 4 over 16 inches, and~~ only 1 over 28 25 inches. Possession limit is twice the daily limit.

RATIONALE: This regulation change standardizes walleye bag limits between this Missouri River section and Canyon Ferry Reservoir. The management goal for walleye in this portion of the Missouri River as described in the *Upper Missouri River Reservoirs Fisheries Management Plan 2010-2019* is to “minimize impacts on existing trout and forage species and provide a low-level sport fishery.” The Plan also indicated that a management strategy is to “Manage the river walleye population consistent with Canyon Ferry management goals and objectives.”

Walleye bag limits on Canyon Ferry were changed in 2014 to allow greater harvest of walleye due to an increase in their abundance. Matching the Missouri River and Canyon Ferry walleye regulation was overlooked at that time. This proposed change will rectify that problem by making the regulations consistent again between the two waters.

CHANGE – page 60 and 64

HOLTER RESERVOIR

Up to American Bar Gulch (approx. 4.6 miles downstream from Hauser Dam)

- Catch-and-release for brown trout, except anglers 14 years of age and younger may take 1 brown trout daily and in possession, any size.
- Combined Trout and Salmon: 5 rainbow trout and salmon daily in any combination and 10 rainbow trout and salmon in possession in any combination.
- Northern pike: No limit
- Walleye: 10 daily, only 1 over 25 inches. Possession limit is twice the daily limit.
- Yellow perch: ~~25~~ 50 daily and no possession limit.
- Hook and Line/Setlines: 6 lines with 2 hooks per line through the ice only.

RATIONALE: The *Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan 2010-2019* recommends increasing the angler bag limit on Holter Reservoir should yellow

perch abundance in fall sinking gill nets increase above 10 fish per net on a three-year running average. The running average after the fall 2013 gill netting was 24 perch/net, which has prompted this proposal. These higher perch densities have increased catch rates from 0.03/hr in winter 2013 to 4.77/hr in winter 2014 and from 0.06/hr in summer 2012 to 0.45 in summer 2013. This increased bag limit will improve angling opportunity while the increased perch abundance lasts. This change is not expected to have a significant effect on the perch population due to the exceptionally high abundance that currently occurs.